

Sampson Independent, The (Clinton, NC)

April 4, 2008

Teens and their faith

Doug Clark; Assistant Editor

SALEMBURG □ Being a teenager in 2008 is not the easiest thing to be. With all the negativity and temptation surrounding Sampson County teenagers, it is comforting to know that many in the community are seeking guidance from a higher power.

There is a movement happening in the area that is growing as each day passes □ that movement is local teens who are collectively seeking the word of God.

So what some have done is taken it upon themselves to take the lead and share in their enthusiasm about Christ by forming their own Bible groups and clubs at their schools.

Led entirely by students, these groups hold meetings once a month before school starts to lift spirits and study the word of God (the schools that host the meetings are not involved).

The newest one is Lakewood High School and if the first meeting was any indication, it will be a huge success.

"When we saw that 25 people came out," said LHS junior Jessica Sessoms, "we were really surprised, but very, very happy."

Sessoms, along with fellow junior Stacey Dudley, got the group started after speaking with their youth pastor (Bryan Jackson of **Mintz** Baptist Church). "We knew that Bryan helped to get the Bible club at Roseboro-Salemburg Middle School started last year," said Dudley. "My little brother (Lucas) goes there and when I drop him off at school, I will go to the meetings there I noticed that with every meeting (at RSMS), the number continues to grow □ that really made us think that we could maybe get something started at Lakewood High School."

"They asked me what I could do to help them," said Jackson, who is in charge of the "Consumed Youth" group at **Mintz**. "At Lakewood, they had a group in the past, but never really had any formal meetings."

The girls (Dudley and Sessoms) came to me and told me about the blessings that they have seen at the middle school and were excited about it I told them the first thing that they needed to do was to get the principal's approval (to meet before school) we met with him and he was very, very supportive."

A few weeks later, the first meeting was held.

"I think it is a wonderful thing," said LHS senior Jessica Alford. "It means a lot to come to school and be able to participate in these meetings. When I first heard about the group forming, I was very excited, because I knew it would be helpful."

Tenth-grader Jamal McBryde agrees, "I was saved when I was 12 years old," he said. "I have been seeking more of God's word and I think that it is a really good thing that this is here now. It makes me feel happy to be able to share in this with my other classmates."

Although the Bible club groups have been in Sampson County since beginning in early 2000 at Midway

High School, it was the second one, that was started by Tim Jackson and the late Carla Jackson, Bryan's wife, at Midway Middle School a few years later.

"That was a real success," Bryan said. "It really evolved from that (at MHS) You know we are just instruments for what the Lord wants us to do we are just here to help others."

Jackson is moved to tears when asked how he feels about the young adults taking the lead to form these groups.

"I will tell you what (pauses), it is the most beautiful thing, and it has been the greatest blessing," he said. "You know society wants to label the kids these days as selfish, but that is really not the case. Here are kids who are stepping up and helping and praying for others instead of themselves. To watch it happening is really something. To see them step up and pray for their family, friends, teachers and just to be so encouraged □ man, it is just awesome. It is truly one of the greatest blessings in my life."

It is something that the students hope will continue at every school. "I would love to see that happen," said Dudley. "Because there were people at the first meeting that I have never even seen before and they came out to check it out □ it was really encouraging."

Sessoms agrees. "It feels really good," she said. "I hope that it will keep going on in every school, that would be great."

Perhaps Alford puts it in perspective best.

"I thought the group would be good because a lot of times in high school, you really feel like you are alone," she said. "And to come to one of these meetings and see that there are other people who believe like you is really something □ it makes you feel a little bit better about everything."

The next meeting at Lakewood High School is next Wednesday, April 9 at 7:15-7:45 a.m. Consumed Youth at **Mintz** Baptist Church meets two Sundays a month and every Wednesday night at 6 p.m. for Bible study. For more information call 564-6500.

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